

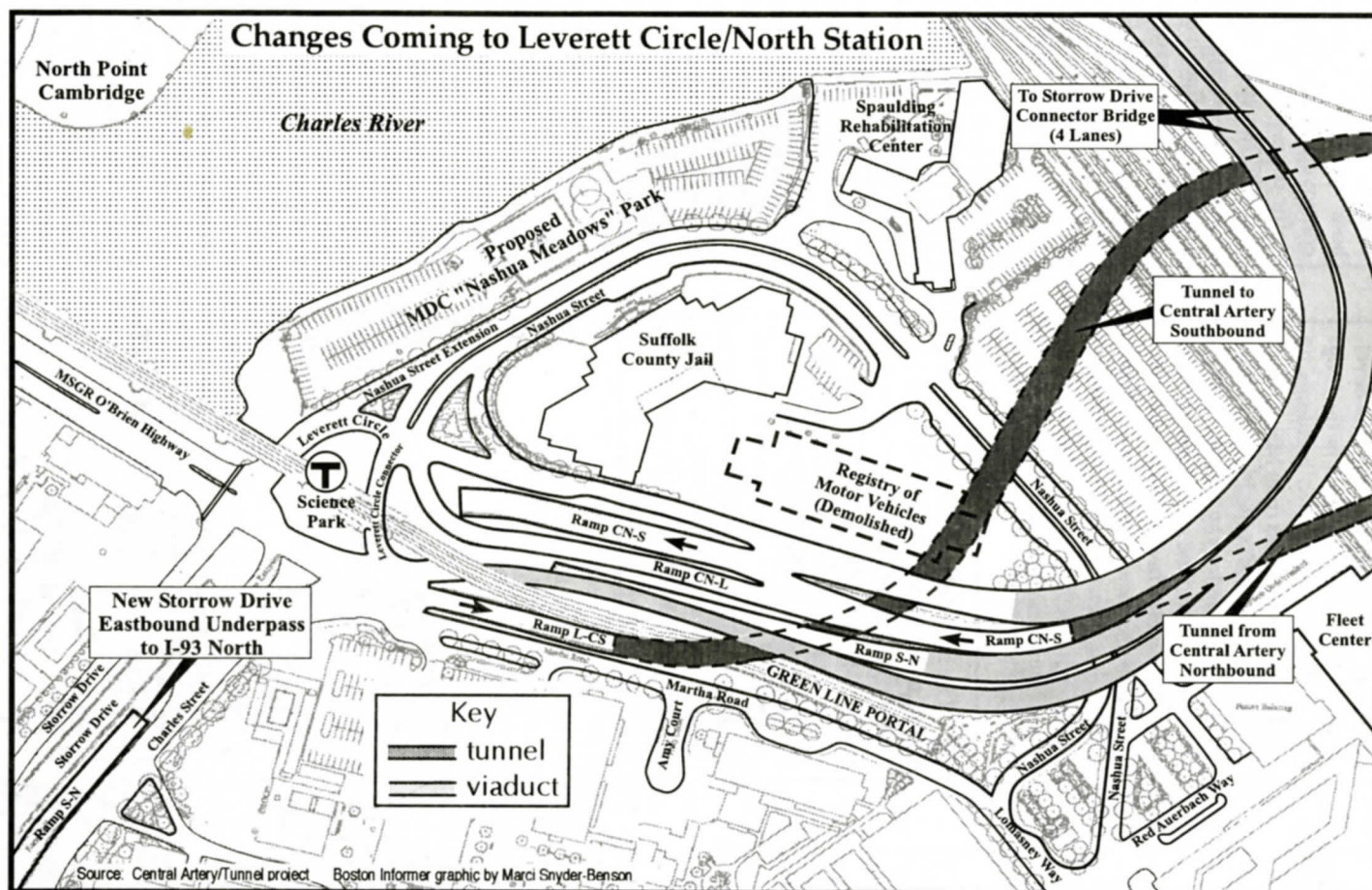
City Sleuth Citation Annual awards on the landscape and cityscape

THE BOSTON INFORMER

No. 35

The newsletter for people who care about Boston

January—February 1998



You won't recognize the Leverett Circle/North Station area for a few years...

The Central Artery/Tunnel (CA/T) project will make big changes in the way traffic flows at Leverett Circle and in the way it looks. This area is gateway to the infamous Charles River Crossing, the link between regional highway facilities on the north and south sides of the river.

The redesigned Leverett Circle area will introduce several new traffic movements. Although some of the traffic will be in tunnels, a large transportation corridor of viaducts, open-cut sections and surface streets will be created. Park and landscape elements of the final design include some of the proposed Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) parkland and improvements to Nashua Street, among others.

Key features in the new Leverett Circle area include:

- new tunnel under Leverett Circle from Storrow Drive eastbound
- a multi-level complex of tunnels and

ramps in a "Lomasney Way transportation corridor" that will be between the Registry of Motor Vehicles site and Martha Road

- demolition of the Registry building to allow for construction of a tunnel for traffic from Leverett Circle to Central Artery southbound
- underground connection from Central Artery northbound to Storrow Drive/Leverett Circle
- a bigger, more prominent Nashua Street—four lanes with a median and sections of parking—that will be the route from Central Artery northbound to the Bulfinch Triangle and downtown
- Green Line tunnel portal at Martha Road from relocated Green Line under Fleet Center garage
- As a sop to Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital, expansion of parking on what was planned as an MDC park is being considered
- New at-grade pedestrian crossing from the State Police site to the proposed MDC Nashua Meadows park

Although changes to the original CA/T plans for the Leverett Circle area have tried to

shift ramps and other elements into a more defined and smaller area to reduce impacts, critics have complained that Leverett Circle will continue to be pedestrian hostile and will feel like a highway interchange.

Some are concerned that new Charles River bridges—seven lanes of traffic southbound—and a less attractive off-ramp across the river will result in more Cambridge/Bay Bay traffic than ever "dumping" into Leverett Circle. Traffic will be heavy enough to require rebuilding pedestrian bridges over Storrow Drive, and patrons from the Green Line Science Park station will still be surrounded by traffic as they descend from the platform.

Downtown North Association members have tried to get the MBTA and the CA/T project to shift Nashua Street slightly east, allowing MBTA patrons to exit into parkland, not into traffic and enhancing access to the park and water. Neither agency has embraced this plan.

Construction at Leverett Circle/North Station is expected to continue until 2002.

People Movers

Alan Schwartz, from Boston Landmarks Commission, to Department of Neighborhood Development.

Cecile Papazian, has moved on from deputy director of the state's Bureau of Transportation Planning and Development.

Lori Prew is the new executive director of Move Mass. 2000

Jane Swift, from unemployed former state senator to Massport to Consumer Affairs to Acting Gov. Cellucci's candidate for lieutenant governor.

Gloria Larson, from Consumer Affairs, to the Convention Center Authority.

Cecil & Rizvi Architects and Planners, has become two firms: The Cecil Group and C & R/Rizvi. Both are located in the Back Bay.

Tanya Holton has left as executive director of the Beacon Hill Civic Assn.

Massport has moved its people out of the State Transportation Building to the Mass. High Tech Center in East Boston.

Randi Lathrop, South End resident and head of Washington Street Task Force, to Boston Redevelopment Authority.

John Magee is no longer commissioner of the Boston Transportation Department.

Andrea D'Amato is the acting commissioner of the Boston Transportation Dept. and chief of Environmental Services.

Charlotte Brewer is the new executive director of the Downtown Crossing Assn.

Janeen Hanson, former Massport and Trust for City Hall Plaza official, to Howard/Stein-Hudson Assoc.

Michael Travaglini, has left as BRA chief of staff to run Shannon O'Brien's campaign for state treasurer.

Pamela Wessling, former official at MassPike, is now the president of the GreenSpace Alliance.

Erik Scheier, from MBTA Planning, to McMahon Assoc. transportation engineering consultants.

1 Condominiums at Downtown Crossing: Cathartes Investments is developing 46 condominium units in the long-vacant upper floors of two buildings on Washington Street across from Macy's. With the renovation of Lafayette Place for office and retail use underway and the Millennium project down the street about to break ground, Cathartes Investments' condominiums are another new development in Downtown Crossing that may help transform the area from a strictly 9-to-5 place to one with evening attractions for residents and workers.

2 The long-delayed Boston-Portland, Maine, train service, an \$85 million project funded by a Maine fund initiative, is supposed to start by the end of 1998. The line will have stops at Haverhill, MA; Durham and Dover, NH; Saco and Wells, ME; and Maine's Old Orchard Beach in the summer. Travel time from Boston to Portland will be just over two hours. Planning is underway to extend the service beyond Portland to Brunswick for the Freeport/L.L. Bean crowd.

3 Peak-hour pricing coming to Logan...Massport is planning a "peak-hour" pricing trial instead of building a controversial new runway to relieve air traffic congestion. The trial period will not start until sometime after 2000.

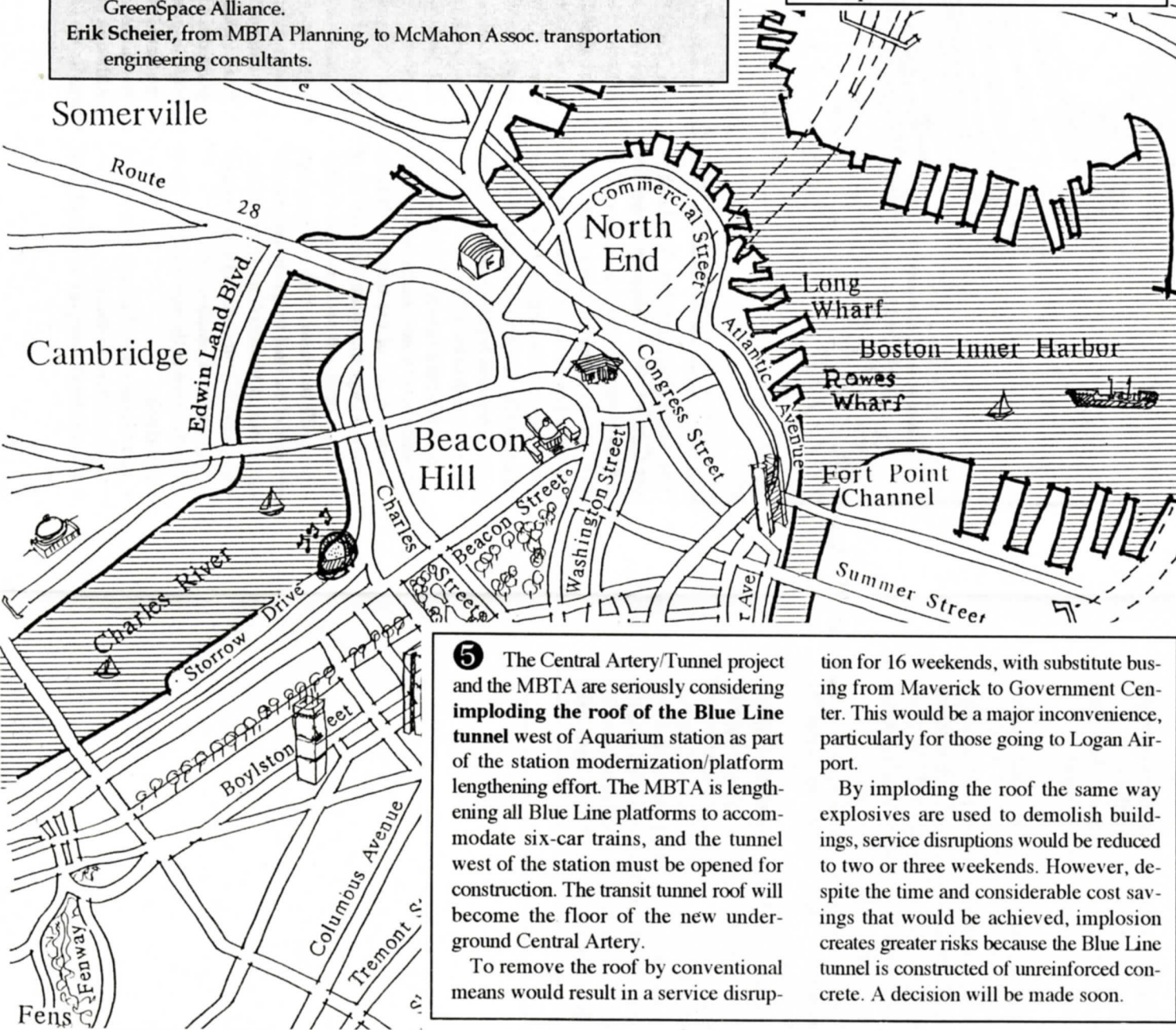
Immediate pressure has been eased by a continuing decline in the number of landings and takeoffs, even as numbers of passengers increase. The decline is due to the increasing use of larger planes and the growth of smaller flights at other New England airports such as Providence, RI, and Manchester, NH. Peak-hour pricing attempts to smooth out traffic throughout the day but costs smaller planes disproportionately more and is unpopular with commuter airlines and general aviation airlines.

A previous attempt in 1988 by Massport to implement peak-hour pricing was stopped by a federal court because the plan was discriminatory by charging higher peak fees for small aircraft. The new plan charges the same peak-hour fee for all aircraft.

4 The long-planned redesign of the MBTA's Airport station on the Blue Line has undergone another change. The Central Artery/Tunnel (CA/T) project recently filed a Notice of Project Change (NPC), indicating the station will be moved 480 feet north toward Wood Island. This settles discussion of changing from the original plan to redesign Airport to possibly "relocating" Airport and its Massport shuttle bus functions to Wood Island. This would have made Wood Island the major transit access point to the Logan Airport.

The new plan retains the cross-platform feature of the original plan for outbound train riders only, allowing riders to step off trains directly onto a bus. Inbound train riders will have to go up and over the tracks to access buses. The NPC assumes that Massport Airport Intermodal Transit Connector (read: low-floor, alternative-fuel bus) system with connections from the Red Line is in place. Urban Ring vehicles will be also able to connect to the station. The CA/T will be responsible for some of the additional costs.

Despite previous claims that the new platform layout would dramatically increase ridership, the NPC does not identify any new riders with this plan. The new station will be open after 2004.

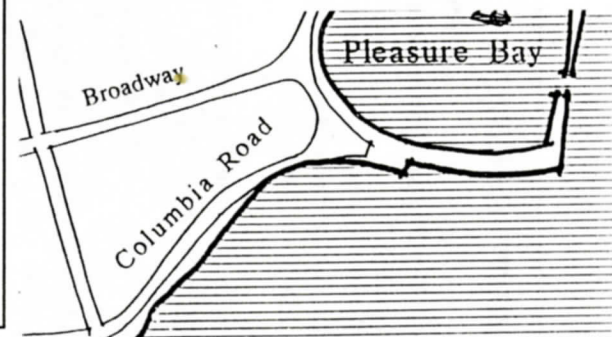


5 The Central Artery/Tunnel project and the MBTA are seriously considering imploding the roof of the Blue Line tunnel west of Aquarium station as part of the station modernization/platform lengthening effort. The MBTA is lengthening all Blue Line platforms to accommodate six-car trains, and the tunnel west of the station must be opened for construction. The transit tunnel roof will become the floor of the new underground Central Artery.

To remove the roof by conventional means would result in a service disruption for 16 weekends, with substitute bus-

ing from Maverick to Government Center. This would be a major inconvenience, particularly for those going to Logan Airport.

By imploding the roof the same way explosives are used to demolish buildings, service disruptions would be reduced to two or three weekends. However, despite the time and considerable cost savings that would be achieved, implosion creates greater risks because the Blue Line tunnel is constructed of unreinforced concrete. A decision will be made soon.



City Hall Plaza Redesign Update...The Boston Redevelopment Authority recently appointed a new committee/citizens panel to mediate the dispute over the City Hall Plaza redesign. The five panel members are: John Fenton, dean of Suffolk University Law School; Douglas Foy, executive director of the Conservation Law Foundation; William Rawn, architect; Karen Cord Taylor, editor and publisher of the Beacon Hill Times; and Ralph Cooper, director of Roxbury-based Veteran's Clearinghouse Benefits. The timetable for action by the new committee is unclear. Meanwhile, the City Council continues to monitor the project, seeks input from interested parties and has hired Larry DiCara as a consultant.

Efforts to redesign the plaza began in 1995 and have progressed to include a program developed by the firms Chan Krieger Assoc. and Hargreaves Assoc. The new panel is charged with review of the efficacy of the proposed hotel (Carpenter & Co. with Interstate Hotels as developer designee) and to ascertain if the hotel and associated parking garage is the right approach for creating and maintaining open space.

The Trust for City Hall Plaza was set up as a private entity to redevelop the existing space and has faced a number of obstacles. Critics have complained about the process, or lack thereof, with some feeling that little input has been sought on the programming and design, especially on the decision to have a high-rise hotel on the existing public open space.

Irish Famine Memorial...Plans to memorialize the Irish Famine, which resulted in the deaths of nearly one million people in Ireland 150 years ago, are nearing completion. The 6,000-square-foot memorial will be located in "Famine Park" at the corner of School and Washington streets near the Borders Bookstore park. The memorial, privately financed by the Boston Irish Famine Committee, will cost nearly \$1 million. Thomas J. Flatley, president of the Flatley Company, chairs the committee that is aggressively fundraising for the project.

The life-size sculpture, by Woburn artist Bob Shure, will depict two families—one ravaged family leaving Ireland and one hopeful family arriving in the United States. The memorial is expected to be finished in June.



Source: The Boston Irish Famine Memorial Inc.

Water, water everywhere...A bitter controversy has developed between the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) and the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The debate is about whether or not the MWRA drinking water supply will meet federal water-quality standards without a \$200 million water filtration plant. The plant's cost would add \$30-\$35 yearly to the average household water bill of \$675.

The MWRA contends EPA is jumping the gun and wants a decision postponed until water quality is measured following completion this year of all other planned improvements. EPA maintains the other measures won't be sufficient. EPA has filed suit in Federal Court to force MWRA to build the plant immediately.

Other current MWRA activities include:

- **new water tunnel from Central Massachusetts' Wachusett Reservoir to Boston** to replace the existing aqueduct. This aqueduct supplies 85 percent of Greater Boston's water and leaks in 36 places. Cost: \$639 million-\$730 million.
- **the second of three sewage treatment plants** at Deer Island has just come on-line. Now, 85 percent of all sewage will get secondary treatment.
- **The controversial 9.5-mile outfall tunnel** into Massachusetts Bay is almost complete and will be operable in 1998. EPA wants a stringent and expensive testing program to monitor its effects.

Welcome to The Boston Informer!

The goal is simple: provide concise public information on construction projects, planning initiatives, and whatever else affects living and working in Boston. Welcome to *The Boston Informer*!

The Boston Informer is published by ATC Information, Inc., six times yearly in Boston, Massachusetts. President: Anthony Casendino; vice-presidents, Anne McKinnon, Chris Fincham.

The Boston Informer is available by mail only. \$20.00 per year (cheap!). Questions? Telephone (617) 723-3584, fax (617) 437-1886 or e-mail: 103477.556@compuserve.com.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Big Dig

MEMORANDUM

Below are several key points the Public Relations firm leading the \$2 million CA/T P.R. effort must stress in its campaign:

P.R. Campaign Goal: Get through the next 5 to 7 years (and November '98 election).

Objectives: To put the Central Artery project in its best light: Project is on time, on budget, out of spotlight.

Strategies: Mitigate, not litigate.

Tools: Hats, horns, flags, detours, smoke, mirrors, ribbons, rabbits, snake oil.

No-No words: Depression, Dukakis, definition of open space, costs, raise tolls, shortfall, delays, police details, Turnpike ramps, Spaulding Rehab, NPC, Ramp DD.

OK words: Scheme Z, Dukakis, Cellucci, Kerasiotes, inflation, revenue from air rights, scope changes, Ted Williams Tunnel, economic engine, cost savings.

Don't mention these people: Previous transportation secretaries, Zarilli, Rep. Wolf.

© 1998 The Boston Informer

You were asking...

Q. Since gasoline prices are so low, wouldn't it make sense to pay state Big Dig costs by increasing state gasoline taxes than tolls?

A. Yes. Also, a statewide gas-tax increase is consistent with Big Dig proponents' claims it benefits the whole region, not just commuters into Boston.

Q. What is happening with the City of Boston's campaign to replace missing street signs?

A. Under the leadership of Andrea D'Amato, new Chief of Environmental Services, about 180 intersections in the Financial District have been surveyed and 47 missing signs replaced. The Back Bay and Fenway are next up. Call 635-SIGN to report a missing sign.

Q. Where can I catch the free shuttle that runs from the Haymarket Parking Garage to the North End?

A. You can't. The CA/T shuttle was discontinued due to low ridership. The shuttle was funded by the project.

Q. I heard there's a new Central Artery "outreach center" in the North End. Where is it?

A. The CA/T opened a North End outreach center in the North End Nursing Home at Richmond and Fulton streets. "Outreach" hours are limited to Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Project materials and resources about the project are pretty scarce in the center.

Q. What is this new bus the MBTA wants to run in the South Boston Piers Transitway?

A. The MBTA has abandoned plans to use 60-foot electric trolley buses for the new service and is now proposing a 40-foot, low-floor bus run on the surface by a diesel engine powering a generator to run the wheels. In tunnel, the bus will run on electric catenary. The current pace of development in South Boston is slower than expected and the MBTA thinks a 60-foot articulated bus is not needed now. However, the service won't be in place until 2002!

**At last: real information coming
on the Central Artery project**

THE BOSTON INFORMER

A publication of ATC Information, Inc.

PO Box 1473 • Boston, MA 02205-1473